

Remarks/Arguments

Reconsideration of the Application is requested.

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 12-15 and 24 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lee et al. (U.S. Patent 6,430,543) in view of Ryan, Jr. (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0026430 in view of Gawler (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0010687) and Pintsov, Jr. (U.S. Patent No. 6,463,354).

Lee discloses the following in col. 3, lines 19-25.

"The assembled mailpiece is then fed to printer 110 where a digital postage mark (DPM) (or indicia) is imprinted thereon. Subsequent to the printing of the DPM, the individual mailpieces 119, each having a unique DPM 120, are sent as a batch of mail "B" together with a SOM 122 to a carrier network facility 124 (in this case the postal service) for acceptance."

Lee discloses the following in col. 5, lines 30-48.

"Referring to FIG. 4, an enlarged view of a single mailpiece 119 having an address block 161 and the digital postage mark 120 is shown. In the instant invention the digital postage mark 120 includes the mailpiece serial number 158, the vault ID 148, the validation codes 160, the date 150 of submission, and optionally the postage amount 162 and an error detection code 164. The digital postage mark 120 while shown in alphanumeric form can also be in a bar code format (linear or two dimensional) or both.

Referring to FIGS. 1 and 5, the operation of the inventive system 100 will be described. At step S1 the inserter system 102 produces a batch of mail "B" including individual mailpieces 119 which each have a digital postage mark 120 thereon. The batch of mail "B" is delivered together with the SOM 122 to the carrier network facility 124 (step S3) where a postal clerk authenticates the SOM 122 and performs a total weight and weight distribution analysis for the batch of mail "B" as described in the '650 patent (step S5) to attempt to detect unaccounted and unpaid for mailpieces."

Lee discloses a digital postage mark 120 that includes the mailpiece serial number 158, the vault ID 148, the validation code 160, the date 150 of submission, the postage amount 162 and an error detection code 164.

Lee discloses the following in Col. 4 line 20-49

The invention of claim 1 overcomes the deficiencies of the '650 patent by creating and sending for each batch of mail "B" the SEM 136. Preferably the SEM 136 is sent electronically to the carrier data center 140 (and a provider data center (not shown) for redundancy purposes (if desired)) which is remotely located from both the inserter system 102 and the carrier facility 124 to which the batch of mail "B" is delivered. However, the SEM 136 could alternatively be a printed document or other tangible medium within which information can be conveyed, such as for example a CD ROM or a floppy diskette.

Referring to FIG. 3, the SEM 136 is shown in detail to include header information 142 which includes a SEM file serial number 144, a mailer ID 146, a vault ID 148, the date 150 of the submission of the batch of mail "B", and the address and postal code 152 of the carrier facility 140 at which the batch of mail "B" is delivered. A second portion of the SEM file 136 includes specific SEM data 154 associated with a particular batch of mail "B". SEM data 154 includes a mailpiece ID range 156 which identifies the mailpiece serial counter range of all of the mailpieces 119 in the batch of mail "B", each individual mailpiece serial number 158, and a corresponding randomly generated validation code 160 specifically associated with each mailpiece serial number 158. Although not shown, vault 114 includes a random number generator to generate and associate the randomly generated validation code 160 with a specific mailpiece serial number 158. Thus, the SEM 136 creates a record for each individual mailpiece 119 included as part of the batch of mail "B".

Lee discloses the following in col. 5 lines 39 to col. 6 line 9.

Referring to FIG. 4, an enlarged view of a single mailpiece 119 having an address block 161 and the digital postage mark 120 is shown. In the instant invention the digital postage mark 120 includes the mailpiece serial number 158, the vault ID 148, the validation codes 160, the date 150 of submission, and optionally the postage amount 162 and an error detection code 164. The digital postage mark 120 while shown in alphanumeric form can also be in a bar code format (linear or two dimensional) or both.

Referring to FIGS. 1 and 5, the operation of the inventive system 100 will be described. At step S1 the inserter system 102 produces a batch of mail "B" including individual mailpieces 119 which each have a digital postage mark 120 thereon. The batch of mail "B" is delivered together with the SOM 122 to the carrier network facility 124 (step S3) where a postal clerk authenticates the SOM 122 and performs a total weight and weight distribution analysis for the batch of mail "B" as described in the '650 patent (step S5) to attempt to detect unaccounted and unpaid for mailpieces. Next, either at the network facility 124 (or at another location

within the carrier network), individual mailpieces 119 are selected based on a sampling rate for further analysis (step S7). For each selected mailpiece the vault ID 148, mailpiece serial number 158, validation code 160, and date 150 are either read from the digital postage mark 120 and entered via a keyboard into a computer 165 residing at the sampling location or are directly scanned off the mailpiece 119 and directly sent to the aforementioned computer 165 (step S9). At each site where mailpiece sampling is done, a site verification file 166 is compiled containing all of the information obtained from the digital postage marks 120 of the sampled mailpieces 119. The site verification file 166 is preferably sent via a telecommunications network 168 to the data center 140 (step S11).

Returning to step S1, at the time the SOM 122 is created, the SEM 136 is also created within the vault 114. The SEM together with a digital signature and a public key certificate are sent via the communications network 139 to the data center 140. The individual SEM 136 files are stored within an SOM database 141 within the data center 140 (step S2). At the data center 140, corresponding SEM files 136 for each mailpiece 119 in the verification file 166 are retrieved by the data center computer 169 based on the vault ID148 and the date of mailing 150 (step S13). At step S15, the computer 169 compares the digital postage mark data 120 for each mailpiece 119 in the verification file with the mailpiece 119 data in the corresponding SEM file 136.

Lee discloses a SEM file 136 that includes specific SEM data associated with a particular batch of mail "B". SEM data 154 includes a mailpiece ID range 156 which identifies the mailpiece serial counter range of all the mailpiece 119, in the batch of mail B.

Ryan discloses the following in paragraph 0029.

[0029] Referring to FIG. 2 in view of FIG. 1, a more detailed view of the postal indicium 30 printed by the postage metering system 25 is shown. Since the postal indicium 30 does not constitute a part of the present invention, the following description is being provided with respect to a particular type of postal indicium 30 by way of background. Generally, the postal indicium 30 includes both fixed data that does not change from indicium to indicium and variable data that may change. The fixed and variable data may change depending upon postal authority requirements and the needs of the postage system manufacturer, but generally can be summarized as follows. The fixed data includes a graphic design 31 (an eagle with stars and US POSTAGE), a meter serial number 32 uniquely identifying the postage meter (not shown) that produced the

postal indicium 30, a licensing post office ID (Zip Code) 33 and an optional facer identification mark (FIM) 34 used during post office processing. The variable data includes a date 35 indicating when the postage was dispensed, a postal value 36 indicating an amount of postage, an indication of a service class (first class, bulk rate, priority, overnight, certified, etc.) that has been selected for the mail piece 20, a bar code 37 containing both elements of both fixed and variable data and, in the most preferred embodiment, authentication information 38. The bar code 37 may be of any conventional format and is provided for the purpose of improving machine readability and increasing automated processing for the mail piece 20. Generally, the authentication information 38 is an encrypted message, such as a digital signature, digital token or other data, derived from the information contained with the postal indicium 30. The authentication information 38 may be in any format, such as: alphanumeric string, bar code or the like. Most preferably, the authentication information 38 is incorporated into the bar code 37. Using the authentication information 38 and other data contained within the postal indicium 30, the postal authority can verify the authenticity of the postal indicium 30 using conventional techniques. Thus, the postal indicium 30 may also be classified as containing authentication information 38 and non-authentication information 31-37 and 39.

Ryan discloses placing an identification code on a mail piece that includes an indication of a service class (First class bulk rate, priority overnight, certified, etc.).

Gawler discloses the following in paragraph 0068-0073.

"[0068] The system may be utilized by a mailer to prepare individual mail items 30 or batches of mail items 30, each batch of mail having an identification and mail items 30 within a batch of mail having an item count within the batch. If desired, a batch of mail may be sub-divided into sub-batches, and, where the term batch is used herein, the term batch is to be understood as including a batch or a sub-batch of mail. In handling a batch of mail, it is required that messages pass between the mail preparation system of the mailer and a postal authority that is to receive and distribute the batch of mail.

[0069] The handling of a batch of mail is effected in phases. The first phase, known as an announcement phase, relates to the preparation of a batch of mail items 30, and the second phase, which follows the first phase, known as an induction phase, relates to the handling of a completed batch of mail items 30 by the postal authority.

[0070] In the announcement phase, a 'Pre-Announcement Message' may be sent by the mailer to the postal authority, informing the postal authority of the intent of the mailer to prepare a batch of mail. When a batch of mail has been prepared and completed, a 'Full Announcement Message' comprising a statement of the mailing, which provides information relating to the mail items 30 contained in the batch, is sent by the mailer to the postal authority. During the preparation of the batch of mail, it is possible that some of the mail items 30 may suffer damage or be otherwise spoiled, and thus withdrawn from the batch of mail. In this case, a 'Modified Announcement Message', which provides information relating to the modification of the batch of mail as a result of the withdrawal of mail items 30, is sent by the mailer to the postal authority.

[0071] When a batch of mail has been completed and is ready for collection from the mailer or for delivery to the postal authority, the induction phase is initiated and an 'Induction Advised Message' is sent to the postal authority. The 'Induction Advised Message' informs the postal authority that an identified batch of mail is ready for collection from the mailer or for delivery to the postal authority.

[0072] When a message sent by the mailer is received by the postal authority, the postal authority sends back an 'Acknowledgement Receipt Message' to the mailer, whereby the mailer is assured that the information in that message has been received by the postal authority.

[0073] When the postal authority has collected the batch of mail or the batch of mail has been delivered to the postal authority, and the batch of mail has been officially received by the postal authority, for example, at a postal authority sorting depot, the postal authority sends an 'Induction Acceptance Message' to the mailer, informing the mailer that the batch of mail has been received by the postal authority. After receipt of the batch of mail, the postal authority may carry out checks on the batch of mail to ensure that the physical batch of mail corresponds to the listing of the mail items 30 in the 'Full Announcement Message', and, when the postal authority has checked the postage indicia on the mail items 30 in the batch of mail and is satisfied that the postage charge data meets the postal authority acceptance criteria, the postal authority sends an 'Agreed Message' to the mailer."

Gawler discloses the induction and acceptance of batches of mail.

Gawler discloses the following in paragraph 0075.

[0075] It will be appreciated that a number of different batches of mail may be at different stages in the announcement and induction phases. As such, it is desirable to be able easily to determine the stage reached by any batch of mail and to check that there has not been a failure in the communication of any of the messages.

Gawler disclose that it is desirable to be able to easily determine the stage reached by any batch of mail.

Pintsov discloses the following in col. 5, lines 5-25.

"Delivery means 160 includes a scanner 162 for scanning DPM 12 at the time of delivery. In accordance with the present invention, postal distribution network 100 further includes a digital data capture computer 170 that is optionally coupled to one or more of the aforementioned components of the postal distribution network 100 for the purpose of capturing information, including value-added services information such as notification to recipient of upcoming delivery, that is read from the DPM of the mail item being processed. As information is captured by digital data capture computer 170, a mail item file 200 (described in detail below) is created. Depending on the value-added services being processed, digital data capture computer 170 communicates through a public electronic communications network 250 with mailer's computer system 10, recipient's computer 32 or a third party computer 300. Communications network 250 may be any conventional communications network, such as the Internet or a cellular/conventional telephonic network, or any combination thereof depending on the type of communication information read from the DPM."

Pintsov discloses the following in lines 36-50 of col. 5

"Mail item file 200 further includes various data elements 320 that are optionally captured depending on the value-added services requested. Data elements 320 may include induction time 330 and induction address 332 indicating when and where mail item 14 enters the postal distribution network 100, intermediate times 340 and addresses 342 indicating various stages of processing within the postal distribution network 100, and delivery time 350 and delivery address 352 indicating when and where the mail item leaves the postal distribution network 100. Data elements 320 may further include information captured when the DPM 12 was read, such as a hash 360 of the contents of mail item 14 and a digital signature and/or certificate 370. "

Pintsov's digital data capture 170 communicates with a mailer's computer 110 information regarding data elements 320. Elements 320 include induction time 330, induction address 332, postal distribution network 100, intermediate times 340 and address 342, various stages of processing 100, delivery time 350, delivery address 352, hash 360, digital signature and/or certificate 370.

The art cited by the examiner do not disclose or anticipate steps a and i of claim 1 amely

- (a) placing an identification code on individual mail pieces with a postage meter at a location other than the post office, wherein the identification code identifies a sender of the mail piece a service requested for the mail piece and uniquely identifies individual mail pieces;
- (i) printing at the postage meter a certificate indicating the identification code that has been read by the post office and the service requested for the mail piece.

Claims 7, 11, 17-19, and 21 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lee in view of Ryan (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0026430), Gawler and Pintsov U.S. Patent (6,463,354).and further in view of Montgomery (U.S. Publication 2003/0101147).

Montgomery discloses the following in paragraph 0186.

"[0186] At steps 1222 and 1224, the centralized postage-issuing computer system 386 receives the confirmatory delivery status information from the master tracking computer system 310 and updates the delivery status within the stored postage transaction information with the confirmatory delivery status information. In particular, the communications interface 1222, under control of the communications module 1234, receives the confirmatory delivery status information over the communications link 396 (step 1222). The database management module 1136 then updates the delivery status within the postage database 1130 (step 1224). If the confirmatory delivery status information indicates that the mail piece carrying the tracking ID has been delivered, the delivery status associated with that tracking ID will be updated as delivered. If the confirmatory delivery status information indicates that the mail piece carrying the tracking ID has not been delivered, the delivery status associated with that tracking ID will be updated as not delivered."

Montgomery discloses providing information regarding the delivery status associated with tracking numbers on mail pieces that have not been delivered.

The art cited by the Examiner do not disclose or anticipate printing at the postage meter a certificate indicating that the identification code and the service request has not been read by the post office after a certain period of time has elapsed after the data center has received the identification code from the meter.

Claims 9 and 20 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Lee et al. in view of Ryan (U.S., Publication No. 2002/0026430), Gawler and Pintsov (U.S. Patent 6,463,354) further in view of the Official Notice, and Pintsov (U.S. Patent No. 6,463,354)..

The art cited by the Examiner and the Official Notice do not disclose or anticipate steps a and i of claim 1.

Claims 22 and 23 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lee et. al. in view of Ryan (U.S. Publication 2002/002643) Gawler and Montgomer, Pintsovy and further in view of Dlugos (U.S. Patent 5,153,842).

Dlugos discloses the following in col. 13, lines 34-50.

"Advantageously, the carrier's truck is equipped with a terminal 300 that comprises a printer and preferably a display as well. The carrier's representative inspects manifest card 2' into the terminal, which reads the manifest data from manifest card 2' and outputs it in human readable form via the display and/or the printer. The carrier's representative then uses the output manifest data to verify that the manifest data accurately reflects the group of parcels that he has received. The truck terminal is programmed to input into manifest card 2' such information as date and time of pick-up, truck identification information, carrier's representative identification information, an authorization code, and point of origin. This information will be referred to as "consignment information." The truck terminal advantageously comprises a keyboard through which the carrier's representative enters some of the information to be input into manifest card 2'."

Dlugos discloses a truck terminal that is programmed to input into a manifest card the date and time of pick-up, truck identification information, an authorization code and point of origin.

The art cited by the Examiner does not disclose or anticipate steps a and i of claim 1.

The art cited by the Examiner and Official Notice do not disclose or anticipate the service being requested is certified mail as claimed in new claim 24. The foregoing allows the mailer to provide legal proof of induction of a certified mail piece.

In view of the above, claims 1-3, 5-24 are patentable.

If the Examiner has any questions would the Examiner please call the undersigned at the telephone number noted below.

Please charge any additional fees that may be required or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account Number 16-1885.

Respectfully submitted,

/Ronald Reichman/
Ronald Reichman
Reg. No. 26,796
Attorney of Record
Telephone (203) 924-3854

PITNEY BOWES INC.
Intellectual Property and
Technology Law Department
35 Waterview Drive
P.O. Box 3000
Shelton, CT 06484-8000